

State Power in Ancient China and Rome

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Urban Systems in the Han and Roman Empires

State Power and Social Control

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THE ancient Han and Roman Empires both stand out among premodern states for their geographical extent and chronological duration. Other premodern empires, though shorter-lived, laid claim to larger territories, such as the Achaemenid Empire or the Abbasid Caliphate, while a handful of smaller imperial systems in early South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and Central America appear to have held sway for longer periods. With respect to both size and longevity, however, the Han and Roman Empires were unparalleled. In order to understand these spectacular projections of state power across space and over time, it is necessary to understand how these two imperial states managed to control the various resources, both material and human, that sustained their respective state apparatus. One way into this complex question is to consider the functions of cities in the two empires. For in both the Han and Roman Empires, as in all complex, agrarian societies, cities were the critical points of concentration in a wider landscape—or, perhaps better, the critical nodes in a more extensive network—in which material and human resources could be organized, regulated, and controlled most effectively. By examining the changing dynamics of urban systems in the two empires, then, we can begin to assess the extent to which cities were the products of Han and Roman state power, respectively, and whether or not they served as effective instruments of social control in these two far-flung imperial states. That is the aim of this chapter.

It must be acknowledged that a systematic and comprehensive comparison of the urban systems of the Han and Roman Empires is not possible. In the first place, we lack the demographic data necessary to measure rates of urbanization with any precision, and the material record from urban contexts is insufficient for documenting, in detail, the intensity with which individual cities interacted with one another as parts of larger urban networks.¹ These problems are particularly acute for the study of early China. Equally problematic is the substantial

1. For a lucid treatment of the challenges in the historical study of urbanization, see de Vries 1990.

imbalance in the modern scholarship on cities, urbanism, and urbanization in the two empires. Mediterranean archaeology has matured into an autonomous discipline, mostly independent of the scholarly agenda set by researchers working primarily from literary sources, and is now beginning to generate the sorts of studies that enable synthetic analysis of long-term settlement patterns across the Roman Empire.² The archaeology of early China, by contrast, remains tethered to the written evidence, and continues to focus on the monumental and artifactual record of the larger sites. There are promising signs of change, but still very little in the way of system-level analyses of urbanization as a multivariate process.³ But these gaps in the demographic and material evidence and the disparate research agendas of scholars working on urbanism in ancient China and the ancient Mediterranean, respectively, do not rule out all comparative analysis of the relationship between urbanism and state power in the Han and Roman Empires. For as I hope to show in this chapter, it is possible to identify some broad patterns and key features of this relationship that shed important light on the nature, extent, and depth of social control within these two imperial systems.

We may define urbanization, following Tisdale, as a process of population concentration that proceeds either through the multiplication of individual points of concentration or by an increase in the size of individual points of concentration (or both).⁴ In the premodern world, these “points of concentration,” which we may call “cities,” were characterized above all by an economy that was structurally distinct from that of the countryside. In particular, they were places populated mainly by the consumers of an agricultural surplus, typified by a relatively complex division of labor (including secondary and tertiary production), and shaped by the resulting economic and social stratification. These were the essential characteristics that distinguished cities from other settlements and from the countryside.⁵ In practice, of course, premodern cities were also differentiated from the countryside because of the concentration there of political institutions, administrative functions, and sociocultural services and attractions. These concentrations resulted largely from the clustering in cities of landowning aristocrats, which not only facilitated the collective decision-making capability of these elites but also attracted artisans, merchants, and others who sought to capitalize on their wealth and spending power. As a result of the clustering of

2. For a basic orientation into Mediterranean archaeology, see Alcock and Osborne 2012; for the most recent overviews of urbanization and settlement in the Roman Empire, see Bowman and Wilson 2011; Noreña in progress b.

3. Li 2008 provides a brief overview of recent research on urbanism in Chinese history, highlighting the continuing emphasis on traditional questions (1–4), but also noting the emergence of new techniques and approaches, such as GIS and “trend analysis” in the study of regional variation in urban activity (16); for an outsider’s perspective on the archaeology of early China, see discussion in Snodgrass 2010 (“still in a phase of youthful vigour,” 247).

4. Tisdale 1942: 311. For the demographic basis of premodern urbanization, see also Scheidel 2007a: 74–85, esp. 81 for the crucial variables that determine relative levels of urbanization.

5. This does not mean, of course, that cities were devoid of agricultural producers, or that the countryside was devoid of secondary production (see, briefly, Bairoch 1989: 263–6); but the structural division between the two spheres is beyond question.

aristocrats in them, that is, premodern cities were not only demographic points of concentration—the primary variable that distinguished them from the countryside—but also political-administrative centers, commercial centers, and cultural centers. The concentration of aristocrats in cities is also particularly relevant to the issues of state power and social control, especially in the case of premodern empires, since these local elites usually served as the critical links between the central state and local communities. For the purposes of this chapter, then, what “urbanization” ultimately measures is the changing spatial distribution of these demographic, economic, political-administrative, and cultural points of concentration, and the interrelated set of processes and activities characteristic of them, especially those in which social power was constituted.⁶

The main argument of this chapter is that state power was significant in structuring urbanization (as defined here) in both the Han and Roman Empires, but that the actual operation of state power was rather different in the two cases, with important implications for the relative capacities for social control possessed by the two states. In the case of the Han Empire, as I will argue, state power was mostly direct and interventionist in its impact on urbanization; in the Roman Empire, by contrast, it was mostly indirect, but still very intrusive.⁷ Of course this distinction between direct and interventionist state power, on the one hand, and indirect and intrusive state power, on the other, is very schematic, and naturally cannot account for every last facet of the relationship between urbanism and state power in the two empires. This schematism is justifiable in the sort of macroscopic comparative analysis undertaken here, however, since my focus is necessarily trained on the “big picture,” and not on the myriad incidental details and minor exceptions from each case.

In order to assess the effects of state power on urbanization in the two empires, we must first consider two important variables. The first is geography. In preindustrial economies, levels of urbanization were always restricted by limited agricultural surpluses, which could only reach urban consumers by means of a communications infrastructure that was itself constrained by transport costs, especially the much higher costs of long-distance overland transport. So the sizes and locations of cities in the Han and Roman Empires were both partly determined by the configuration of the wider landscapes in which these cities were situated. The second important variable to bear in mind is the level and extent of urbanization prior to the consolidation of power by the Han and Roman states. For both empires established their rule over territories that already had well-established patterns of urban and rural settlement. These preexisting settlement

6. This broadly functional understanding of “the city” in the premodern world draws in particular on Wickham 2005: 591–6, and on Horden and Purcell 2000: 89–122, who stress that cities are always the products of deeper, mainly ecological processes; cf. Abrams 1978 for helpful discussion of towns not as independent variables, but as key sites within “larger systems,” whether seen in political, social, or economic (and, I would add, cultural) terms.

7. The formulation here is inspired by Alcock 1993: 129–71.

patterns must be taken into account if we are to identify the specific changes that came about as the result of Han and Roman state power. Let us briefly consider each variable in turn.

First, geography. The world of early imperial China—roughly the eastern half of modern China south of Inner Mongolia and Manchuria—evolved within the macroregions defined by two large drainage basins, “natural vessels for territorially based socioeconomic systems.” The first, to the north, was cut by the Yellow River and its tributaries, and was composed of loess highlands in the west and southwest, low mountains and rolling hills in the northwest, and a giant alluvial floodplain in the east. The loess soils of the highlands and the sedimentary soils of the floodplain were both very fertile, but the latter required an elaborate irrigation system to offset the effects of low rainfall and a reduced river flow during the growing season (late spring and early summer). The second drainage basin, to the south, was formed by the Yangtze River and its major tributaries. Surrounded by high mountain chains and rugged hills, this region was considerably hotter and wetter than its neighbor to the north, and its agricultural productivity marginal at best. Because of its superior soils, milder climate, and greater ease of communications, the Yellow River valley was much better suited to supporting a large, settled population. It formed the central core of the Han Empire, reflected both in the spatial distribution of kingdom and commandery capitals throughout the empire, with a clear concentration in the North China Plain, and especially in the higher population densities of this area, as recorded in the *Hanshu* census figures of 2 CE (fig. 1).⁸

Growing outward from its original core on the Italian peninsula, the Roman Empire came to be centered on the Mediterranean Sea, from which it spread deep into the continental hinterlands around the sea’s perimeter. It used to be conventional to categorize the entire core region as having a “Mediterranean” climate, but recent work has underlined the striking diversity of the empire’s numerous microregions, which comprised a very wide range of landscapes, ecologies, and agricultural regimes. In the most general terms, the geography of the Mediterranean world was characterized by a sea that facilitated both short- and long-distance communications (except in the winter months), and a continental periphery that was not only densely fragmented but also often screened from the sea by high coastal chains that restricted access to the interior. Because this was a world of relatively low agricultural surpluses and unpredictable fluctuations in rainfall and temperature, the forging of multiple links between microregions was

8. For the relationship over the long term between cities and regions in China, see Skinner 1977, esp. 9–30, 211–18, 275–99 (quoted, 11); on regionalism in early China, see Lewis 2006: 189–244 and 2007: 5–29. On kingdoms and commanderies, see Bielenstein 1980: 90–9; Loewe 2006: 37–55. On *Hanshu* figures and population density, see Bielenstein 1947. It should be noted that there was significant population movement, over the long term, from north to south (see Skinner 1977: 9–11, with table 1.1), but for most of the Han period, the south remained a peripheral zone; see Erickson, Song-mi, and Nylan 2010: 152–65.

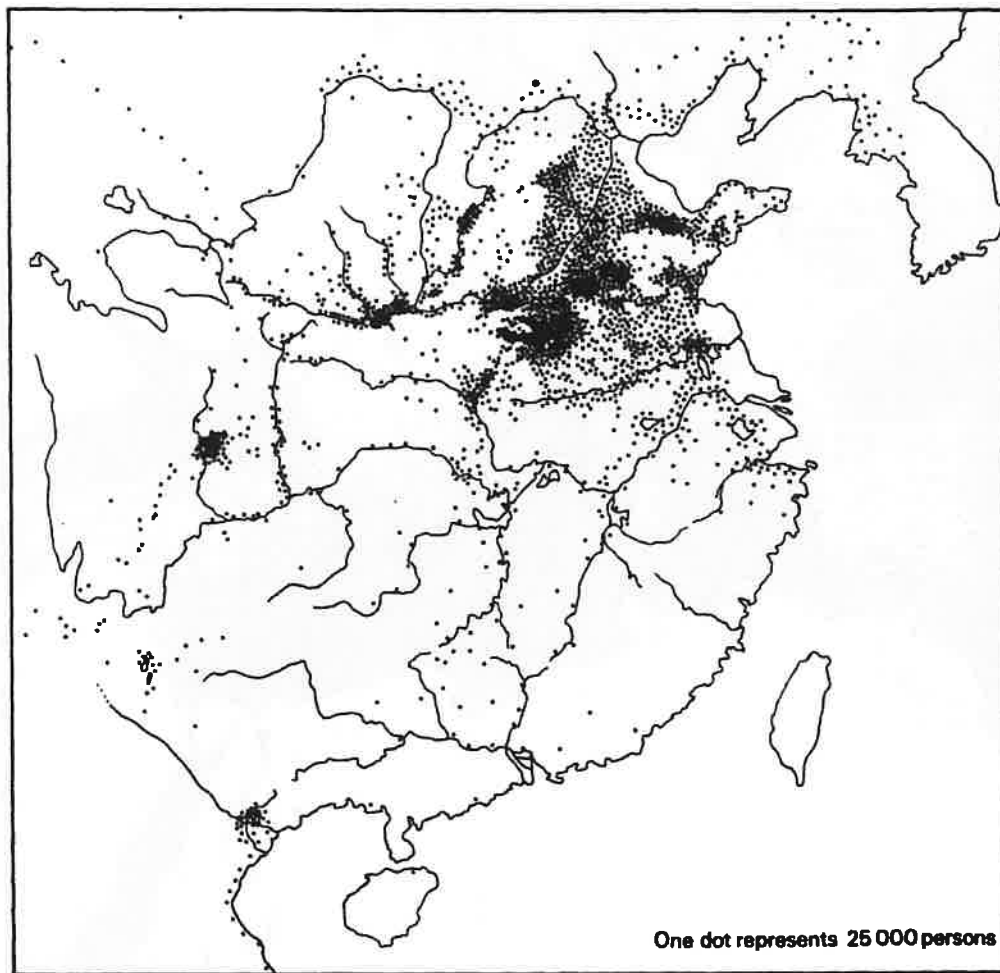


FIGURE 1. *Settlement Distribution in the Han Empire in the Early First Century CE.*

the best strategy to minimize endemic environmental risk. Connectivity, in brief, was critical.⁹ As a result of this basic imperative, the spatial distribution of cities in the Roman Empire was quite uneven, with much higher concentrations of urban settlement on or near the Mediterranean coast and in proximity to navigable rivers (fig. 2).¹⁰

In both the Han and Roman Empires, then, geography played a crucial role in determining the spread of cities. Agricultural productivity and the efficiency of natural communications were the two key criteria that governed the potential for urban density. In this respect, the Yellow River drainage basin and the perimeter

9. The study of Mediterranean ecology and connectivity in the premodern period was placed on a new footing by Horden and Purcell 2000. For the functional “shape” of the Roman world, incorporating geography, travel times, and seasonal data, see now the Stanford ORBIS project: <http://orbis.stanford.edu>.

10. Figure 2 represents a preliminary map from a research project on the urbanization of the Roman world (Noreña in progress a). It is based on data collected from the *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (Princeton, 2000), and includes all sites from the “Roman” period (ca. 30 BCE–300 CE) that were larger than the smallest settlements included in the *Barrington Atlas* (i.e., the top four sizes in the five-size typology employed in the atlas, as explained on xxv).

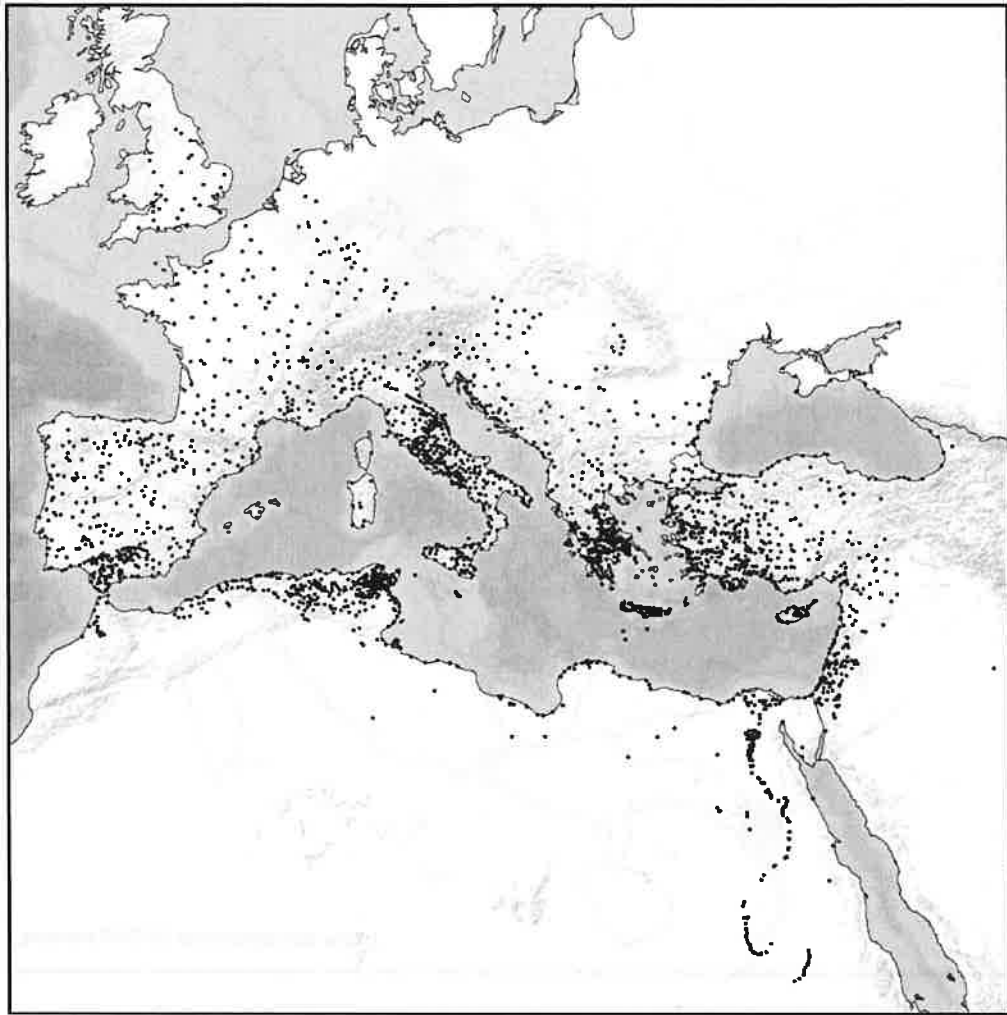


FIGURE 2. *Urban Sites in the Roman Empire in the Mid-Second Century CE.*

of the Mediterranean Sea may be seen as structurally analogous. Both macroregions, each broadly oriented along an east-west axis, served as the geographical cores of wider imperial systems, and both, not incidentally, were marked by higher concentrations of cities than their respective peripheries.¹¹ These were the geographical parameters within which urbanism developed in the two empires.

Preexisting settlement patterns in the areas that came to be controlled by the two empires were also analogous, at least in large-scale spatial terms. Permanent, walled settlements in the North China Plain can be traced back to the second millennium BCE.¹² For the itinerant kings of the Shang Dynasty (ca. 1600–1046 BCE),

11. See Lewis 2007: 7 for the predominance of east-west lines of communication in early imperial China. The Mediterranean also lies along an extended east-west axis, and much of its history in the premodern period reflects an underlying “divide” between East and West (see, briefly, Horden and Purcell 2000: 18–22; cf. Bowersock 2005), but the sea itself facilitated multidirectional communications in a way that was not true of the river basins of the Chinese heartland.

12. The earliest, nonwalled settlements can be dated to the Neolithic period (ca. 5000 BCE), but these sites do not really count as “urban,” according to the criteria listed above; see discussion in Steinhardt 1990: 36–42.

these settlements served as strategic hubs, and in this respect can be seen as forming the “backbone” of the Shang state. These settlements seem to have functioned in this way under the Western Zhou rulers (ca.1045–771 BCE) as well.¹³ It was really during the Spring and Autumn period (770–481 BCE), though, following the collapse of centralized, monarchic political authority in the eighth century BCE, that largely autonomous (but often federated) city-states first arose, and that a mature and stable urban network in the North China Plain first came into being. It has been estimated that the larger cities during this period, which numbered around two hundred, had populations in the tens of thousands, and perhaps averaged something on the order of eight to nine square kilometers in size.¹⁴ By comparison with their predecessors, these cities had more developed infrastructural capacities, especially in terms of drainage systems; were more articulated spatially, with burials, for example, confined to the cities’ extramural territories; and had more differentiated urban economies, characterized by increased handicraft specialization.¹⁵ The average distance between these larger urban agglomerations was around ninety to one hundred kilometers.¹⁶ They clearly sat at the top of regional settlement hierarchies, but the number, spread, and intensity of interaction between these secondary centers are unknown. Outside of the North China Plain, the only other heavily urbanized region was the Chengdu Plain in the upper Yangtze river valley. Here, too, a mature urban system emerged during the Spring and Autumn period, with several large cities, such as Chengdu, Guangdo, and Xindu, serving as the cores of more extensive urban networks.¹⁷ Other regions that came to be controlled by the Han state, by contrast, were much less urbanized, especially throughout the mountainous and less hospitable regions of the middle and lower Yangtze River drainage basin. In the geographical spread of cities and urban networks, then, the territory that came to be ruled by the Han (and their Qin predecessors) was marked by a dramatic imbalance between a heavily urbanized north, especially in the North China Plain, and a much less urbanized south (with the exception of the Chengdu Plain).¹⁸

Mediterranean urbanization prior to the Roman conquest was also unbalanced geographically, with many more cities in the eastern half of the Mediterranean world than in the western half. This imbalance stems from the long urban

13. For the function of urban centers in the Shang period, see Keightley 1983; cf. Lewis 2000b: 359–62.

14. Figures in the text are from Steinhardt 1990: 43–50; but see also Chen 1994, based on six case studies of Spring and Autumn cities, suggesting an average size of sixteen square kilometers for the larger cities. In general on the world of the Spring and Autumn city-states, see Lewis 2000b.

15. For these changes, see Chen 1994: 735–40, with table 6 (evidence for handicrafts).

16. Lewis 2000b: 363, citing the calculations of Miyazaki Ichisada.

17. Duan 1999 emphasizes the rapid growth of the urban system in this region during the Spring and Autumn period, and argues that urbanization in this region, unlike in the Yellow River valley, was driven by economic (and not political) considerations.

18. For a recent overview of the archaeology of the nonurbanized peripheries of the North China Plain, see Erickson, Song-mi, and Nylan 2010.

tradition in the East, which began and developed with the rise and growth of centralized states in the Near East and Egypt (beginning in the third millennium BCE); progressed with the rise of the *polis* in the central and southern Greek peninsula (beginning in the eighth century BCE); spread throughout the central and eastern Mediterranean with Greek colonization in the Black Sea, southern Italy, Sicily, and parts of North Africa (ca. 800–600 BCE); and was further reinforced by the foundation of new cities and the urban-based administrations of the Hellenistic kingdoms (ca. 300–30 BCE).¹⁹ The larger cities in this world system had populations in the tens of thousands—the largest, such as Antioch and Alexandria, perhaps reaching into the low hundreds of thousands—and all served the multiple functions, economic, politicoadministrative, and cultural, normally associated with higher-order centers. By the time of Roman imperial expansion into the eastern Mediterranean in the second century BCE, in brief, this macroregion was already highly urbanized. The western Mediterranean and continental Europe, by contrast, could be seen as a tribal periphery of this urbanized and politically centralized world. In these areas, social and political institutions were quite rudimentary, and urbanism had not taken hold outside of a few isolated pockets, usually on or near the Mediterranean coast.²⁰ Empirical data for urbanization in the ancient Mediterranean illustrates this geographical imbalance. In the early third century BCE, just prior to Rome's creation of an overseas empire, there were something on the order of thirteen hundred cities in the territories that came to be incorporated into the Roman state, of which roughly 90 percent were located in Italy, Sicily, Numidia, and the eastern half of the Mediterranean basin.²¹ As in the case of the Han Empire, so too in that of Rome, the territory that came to be conquered and annexed by the central state was characterized by a fundamental division between a heavily urbanized zone (in this case the central and eastern thirds of what became the Roman Empire) and an adjacent zone almost wholly devoid of cities and urban networks (the western third).

These, then, were the main geographical parameters and historical contexts within which urban systems developed in the Han and Roman Empires, and they must be kept in mind in attempting to identify the impact of state power in shaping urbanization in each of the two imperial states. In order to sustain my argument that state power tended to operate differently in the two empires—direct and interventionist in the case of Han, indirect (but intrusive) in the case of

19. For the rise of cities and urbanization in Mesopotamia in the third millennium BCE, see, e.g., Kuhrt 1997, vol. 1, part 1; van de Mieroop 2007: part 1. Hansen and Nielsen 2004 provide an inventory of Greek cities in the archaic and classical periods (ca. 800–300 BCE). Jones 1940 remains the best single-volume survey of Greek cities during the Hellenistic period; for a more recent overview, see also Billows 2003.

20. Dietler 2007 offers a useful overview of the pre-Roman, late Iron Age West.

21. Figures from Noreña in progress a. The database includes 1,270 sites attested in ca. 300 BCE. Note that this number includes “size four” cities (see above, n. 10), so should be seen as a “high” count; the “low” count, which would only include cities in the top three ranks, comes to 562 sites. The pronounced geographical imbalance between East and West, the main point I want to stress here, is the same on either count.

Rome—I will explore three topics: capital cities, what I will call “artificial” cities, and urban-based administration. This will then set the stage for a broader discussion of the “place” of elites in cities, and the spatial distribution of social power more generally, which should provide some insight into the problem of social control in the two empires. It goes without saying that all of these topics are vast, and that it is far beyond the scope of this chapter to examine any of them in detail. What follows, then, is just a sketch, designed to illustrate, rather than formally prove, my thesis.

1. CAPITAL CITIES

The capital cities of premodern empires were, above all, centers of power. They were usually primate cities, often dwarfing even the next largest cities in the urban networks in which they were situated. It was in capital cities that political institutions and decision-making authority were most concentrated. As a result, capital cities tended to control the material resources of the territories under their rule. The centrality of capital cities was also symbolic, as monuments, public space, and public rituals usually differentiated the capital city from all others, making it a place of wonder. And this, too, helped to define the capital city’s place at the center, and top, of a wider imperial system. So in several respects, capital cities are relevant to the issues of state power, urbanization, and social control.

Chang’an, the capital city of the Western Han Empire, was more or less built from scratch under the first Han emperor, Gaozu (r. 206–195 BCE). Founded on the site of an earlier Qin palace, near a strategic location on the Wei River, the city grew rapidly into a giant urban agglomeration and spectacular expression of Han state power and monarchic authority (fig. 3). The urban space of Chang’an was dominated by five royal palaces, built under successive Han emperors, which together occupied roughly two-thirds of the area within the city walls. These palaces were multipurpose structures, serving not only as ritual and administrative complexes but also as towering and intimidating expressions of the power and prestige of the ruling dynasty.²² Equally impressive were the city’s exterior walls, constructed during the reign of Gaozu’s successor, the emperor Hui (r. 194–187 BCE), standing 12 meters high, measuring 25,700 meters in perimeter, and enclosing an area of roughly 36 square kilometers, and the elaborate sequence of interior walls, which emphatically partitioned space within the city.²³ Other markers of imperial authority in the city included the Armory, a massive structure (ca. 250,000 square meters) which contained a huge stockpile

22. See discussion in Steinhardt 1990: 55–7, 63–5, and 67–8; Wu 1995: 150–6; Pirazzoli-t’Serstevens 2010: 174–5. In general on the expression of monarchic ideology in early imperial cities, with emphasis on verticality and invisibility, see Lewis 2006: 150–69.

23. On exterior walls, see Hotaling 1978. For the interior walls, see briefly Brennan and Hsing 2010: 204; in general on the partitioning of urban space in early Chinese cities, see Yinong 2000: 74–7 and 239.

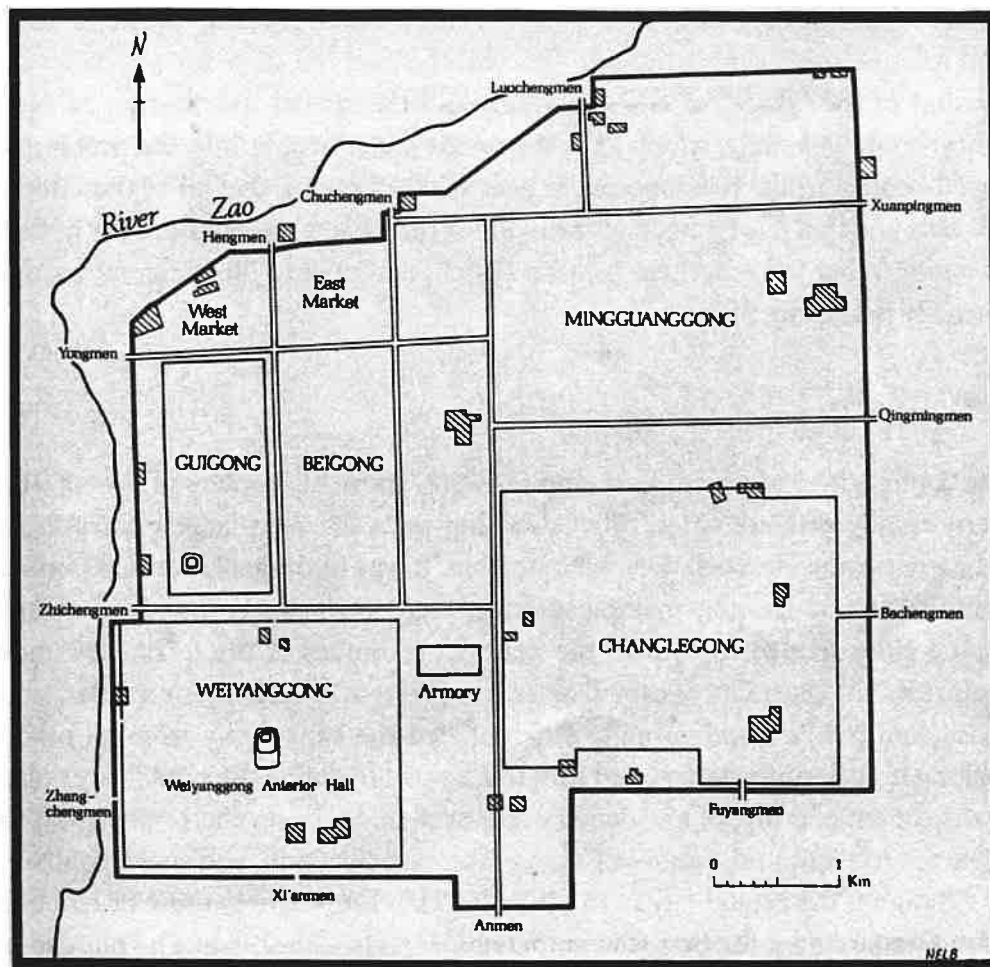


FIGURE 3. *Plan of Chang'an in the Early First Century CE.*

of the regime's weapons and armor, and the numerous gate towers located throughout the city, especially at the monumental city gates and inside the two central markets, which conveyed an unmistakable message of imperial omnipresence and official surveillance.²⁴ As a "palace" city, Chang'an was certainly a potent symbol of the Han Dynasty. But these palaces also housed a number of imperial archives, making the city a key administrative center, and a new imperial library, making it a locus for the organization of knowledge; it was also a site where broader cultural and intellectual trends, such as classicism (sometimes labeled "Confucianism"), originated or gained momentum.²⁵ In addition, it became a major urban agglomeration, with a population perhaps on the order of four hundred thousand, and a magnet for the ambitious elites of other areas.²⁶ It also spurred the development of an entirely new urban network, formed by the

24. On the Armory, see Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens 2010: 175. On gate towers in early Chinese cities, see Lewis 2007: 77–9.

25. For these aspects of Chang'an, see the editors' introduction to Nylan and Vankeerberghen forthcoming.

26. The population is calculated from the census data of 2 CE; see Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens 2010: 177.

tomb towns that grew up in the city's outskirts (see below, section 2). In demographic, political, and cultural terms, then, the city of Chang'an was clearly a key point of concentration, the critical node in the overall urban system of the Han Empire. It was also, both in its origins and in its subsequent development, a direct product of Han state power.

It took hundreds of years before the city of Rome reached the size of Chang'an, or occupied a position of comparable influence and power. Embedded within a cluster of other city-states in central Italy, but benefiting from its relatively large size, Rome had assumed a dominant position over the other cities of Latium by the end of the fifth century BCE, and by the middle of the third century BCE had become the sole hegemonic power in the Italian peninsula.²⁷ It was not until the second century BCE, however, that the city of Rome grew into a true megalopolis, mainly as the result of rural immigration from within Italy. This large-scale population shift was itself triggered by fundamental changes in landholding patterns throughout the Italian peninsula, brought about by the massive influx of wealth and slave labor that came with the Roman state's rapid expansion into the Mediterranean basin.²⁸ The population of the city continued to grow over the course of the last two centuries BCE, eventually reaching (and perhaps surpassing) the plateau of 1 million inhabitants, and because of its size and political influence, it shaped the dynamics of urban networks throughout the peninsula, and dictated the flow of material and human resources within it.²⁹ And yet, because the Roman state still operated under a republican system of government, in which decision making was spread out across multiple institutions, and political power divided between a group of fiercely competitive aristocratic families, there was little in the way of consistent, centralized, long-term planning in the city itself, with the result that Rome's cityscape was somewhat erratic and symbolically fragmented, hardly emblematic of its status as an imperial capital.³⁰ The situation in the monumental city center began to change under the influence of the "warlords" of the late Republic, especially Sulla and Caesar in the first century BCE, as the Forum area and Capitoline Hill began to reflect Rome's imperial power. But it was really with the advent of monarchy under Augustus, and the effective monopolization of decision-making authority under the new regime, that the city

27. Rome's conquest of Italy can be attributed to its huge manpower advantage over its competitors, the product of an effective system of treaty obligations imposed on defeated communities; see Eich and Eich 2005 for a cogent analysis of republican imperialism as a type of state formation; and see further discussion below. The population of the city at the end of the third century BCE has been estimated at two hundred thousand (Morley 1996: 39, with references to earlier literature).

28. The causation, chronology, and impact of these interrelated developments continue to be the subject of intense debates (to which the formulation in the text above, which derives mainly from Hopkins 1978: 1–98, can hardly do justice). For a recent discussion, with ample references, see Rosenstein 2008.

29. On population, see Lo Cascio 2000. For the effects of the city of Rome on Italian urbanization and economic organization, see Morley 1996 and 2001; Patterson 2006. For the demographic background, see Scheidel 2008b.

30. A convenient overview of Rome's republican topography is in Dyson 2010: 17–116; for the relationship between competitive politics and a fractured urban cityscape, see also Favro 1996: 24–78.

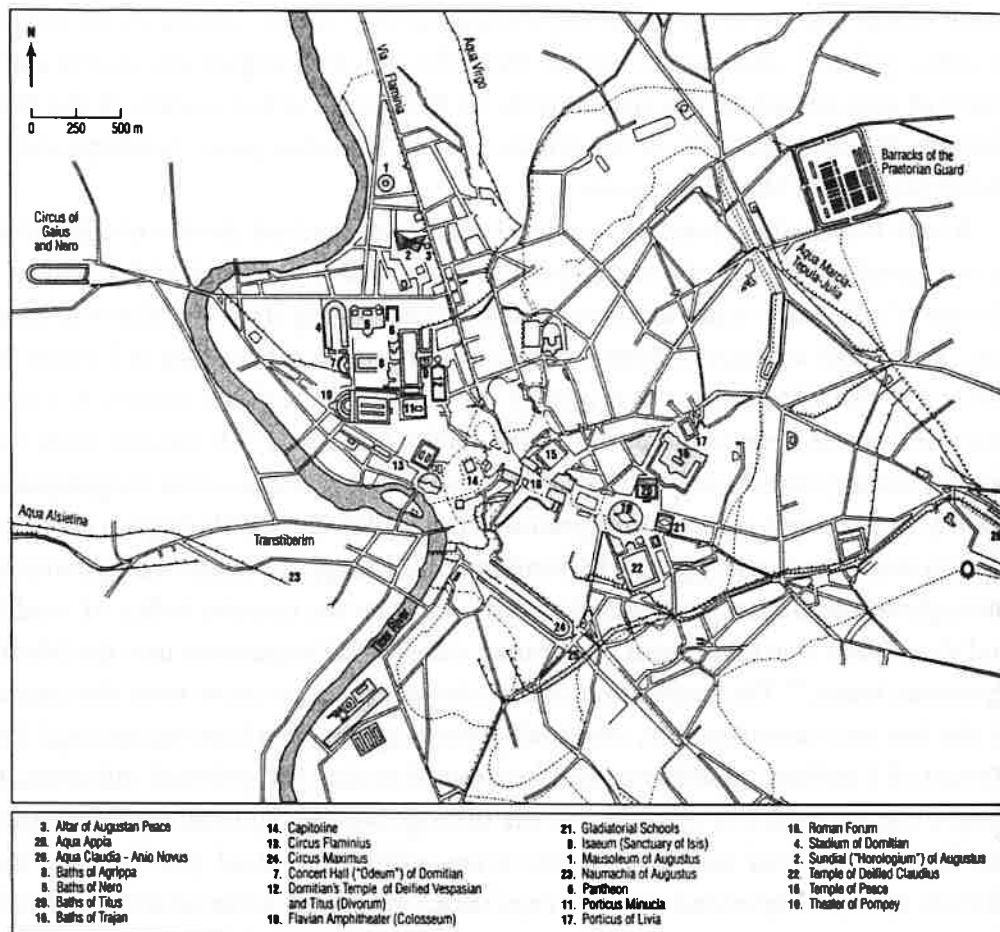


FIGURE 4. *Plan of Rome in the Early Second Century CE.*

was transformed, especially in its internal administration and in its urban fabric, which increasingly reflected the power and dominance of Augustus and his successors (fig. 4).³¹ From that point forward it was very much an imperial capital, as a political and administrative center; as the main hub in the Mediterranean-wide networks of objects, ideas, and people; and as a monumental expression of Rome's dominance over a far-flung empire. In these respects, it was both a product and an instrument of Roman state power.

With very large populations and significant control over supraregional resource flows, and as centers of key decision-making institutions, aggrandized by a series of imposing public monuments, both Chang'an and Rome were appropriate capital cities of their respective empires. They were also effective vehicles for the maintenance of state power, both politically and ideologically. As products of state power, however, they developed in very different ways. Whereas Chang'an was self-consciously and deliberately created by the emperor Gaozu to be a new

31. For the transformation of Rome under Augustus, see Favro 1996; cf. Dyson 2010: 117–91. For the impact of monarchy on the city more generally, see Ewald and Noreña 2010.

imperial capital, and was therefore a direct product of state power, the city of Rome, under the Republic, only gradually developed into a large and influential city as the result of Rome's Italian and overseas conquests, and should be seen, as a result, as an indirect product of state power. Both Chang'an and Rome—like all capital cities—depended on particular configurations of political authority and military power, that is, but only in the case of the former was that authority and power translated into the making of a capital city in a “top-down” manner. Under the imperial monarchy, the city of Rome came to function in a manner that was very similar to Chang'an, and was increasingly, like the Han capital, a product of direct state power.³² So it is important to be sensitive to changes over time in the position of the two cities within their respective political landscapes. At least in their origins and early histories, though, Chang'an and Rome developed along rather different trajectories, and thus demonstrate the different short- and long-term effects of state power in the formation of capital cities.

2. “ARTIFICIAL” CITIES

All cities in preindustrial economies are in one sense artificial, in that they depend on a set of political institutions, coercive instruments, and legitimizing mechanisms that together enable a group of nonprimary producers to live off the surplus produced by peasant farmers. Nevertheless, we can still make a useful distinction between urbanization as a deep and embedded process and the formation of those urban agglomerations that only come about through the rational-purposive actions of the central state. Good examples of such cities, which we may call “artificial,” to distinguish them from those cities that develop more organically, can be found in both the Han and Roman Empires, but they arose, as we will see, through quite different modalities of state power.

The clearest examples of artificial cities in the Han Empire were the so-called tomb towns that appeared in the outskirts of Chang'an. These towns grew up in the immediate vicinities of the royal tombs of Han emperors, which were buried underneath massive artificial mountains erected to the north of the capital city, on a ridge along the north side of the Zheng Guo canal (north of the Wei River), and to the east, along the Chan River.³³ Thirteen such funerary mounds were constructed under the Western Han state, from that of the emperor Gao (r. 202–195 BCE) at Changling to that of the emperor Ping (1 BCE–6 CE) at Kangling (fig. 5). Designed to provide an elaborate ritual space for deceased emperors and their families, these monumental tomb complexes required regular maintenance and a steady income, which in turn required designated territories and a sufficient

32. This is a central argument of Noreña forthcoming. For the more conventional view that Chang'an and Rome were fundamentally different, especially in their respective cityscapes, see Brennan and Hsing: 2010; cf. Lewis's chapter in this volume, chapter 7.

33. On the imperial tombs, see most recently Loewe 2010a.

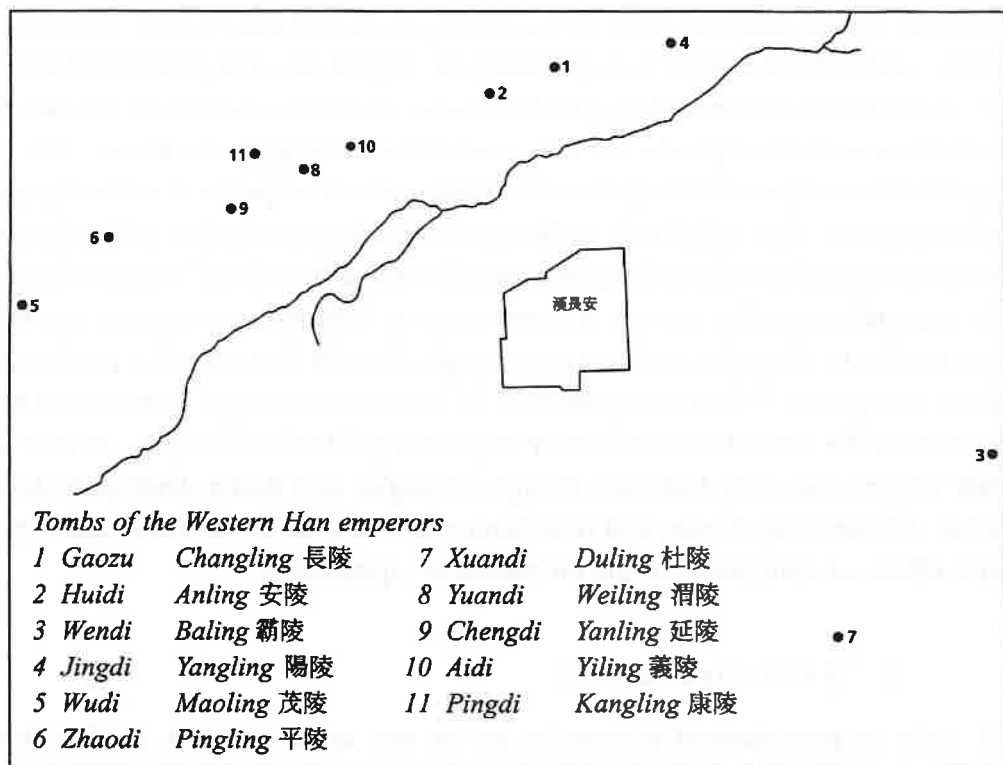


FIGURE 5. *Tomb Towns on the Outskirts of Chang'an, Early First Century CE.*

number of permanent inhabitants to sustain them. In order to secure the necessary populations, a number of Han emperors, on at least seven occasions, forcibly removed peoples from elsewhere in the empire, often including leading families from provincial areas, and resettled them in these new towns adjacent to the capital.³⁴ And the numbers were impressive. According to one estimate, these towns reached populations of over three hundred thousand, and some of them might have been larger than the city of Chang'an within the walls.³⁵ In terms of size, then, these tomb towns were major settlements, and we may assume that they fulfilled a number of higher-order urban functions. These new cities were also self-consciously manufactured by the central state. If a line of royal tombs had not been set up along the Zheng Guo Canal, and had provincial populations not been forcibly resettled in their immediate vicinities, there is no reason to believe that this string of very large cities would have developed in this particular place. These tomb towns, then, represent an unambiguous case of a type of urbanization driven by the direct and interventionist application of state power.

34. Loewe 1986a: 209–10; Lewis 2007: 22–3 and 95–6. The logic of such population transfers is articulated by a court official who attempts to convince the emperor Chengdi (r. 33–7 BCE) that another such transfer should be effected: “For more than thirty years nobody in the empire has moved to live in towns associated with imperial tombs. There is an increasing mass of wealthy people east of the passes, most of whom have fixed their claim to the best fields and are causing the poor to serve them. They ought to be moved to the new tomb, in order to strengthen the imperial capital and weaken the regional nobility” (*Hanshu* 30, quoted in Lewis 2007: 23).

35. Lewis 2007: 95, referring to census data from 2 CE (see above, n. 26).

In the Roman Empire, the civilian settlements (*vici* and *canabae*) that developed in the Danubian frontier zone could also be seen as “artificial” cities. This zone had very little contact with the world of the Mediterranean, and no real tradition of urbanization, prior to the Roman conquest under the emperor Augustus at the turn of the first millennium. And yet by the end of the second century CE, this frontier area was studded with an interlocking series of urban agglomerations.³⁶ The evolution of this particular urban system is easy to trace. Over the course of the first century CE, following the Augustan conquest, a cordon of military bases was set up along the Danube River, comprising both massive legionary bases and smaller auxiliary forts. In addition, several veteran colonies were founded between the Balkans and the Danube. At the beginning of the second century, under the emperor Trajan, the Dacian Kingdom north of the Danube was conquered and annexed, while a more extensive road system and increased colonial settlement in the lower Danube region facilitated the development of a mature, regional urban network. By the middle of the second century, in fact, scores of civilian settlements had grown up in the immediate vicinity of the military installations along the Danube and in Dacia, many of which were converted by the emperor Hadrian into formal Roman municipalities.³⁷ Lacking some of the defining characteristics of classical Mediterranean cities, especially in terms of monumental architecture, these civilian settlements in the Danube frontier zone used to be ignored by historians of Roman urbanization, but it is now widely recognized that these sites sat atop regional settlement hierarchies, and many provided the sorts of services associated with higher-order centers. On any functional definition, that is, they qualify as “cities.” And they were all the products of Roman state power. These settlements had not arisen, however, because the central state had implemented a policy of urbanization in this area, but rather because previously dispersed local populations were attracted to these sites by the prospect of profiting from the presence there of Roman soldiers, stationed along the frontiers for strategic reasons and flush with the money paid to them by the central state.³⁸ So the role of state power in generating this particular urban system is clear, but its impact on this regional settlement pattern was indirect, a consequence—surely unintentional—of its military strategy and fiscal apparatus.

Both in the case of the tomb towns around Chang'an and in the case of the civilian settlements adjacent to military installations along the Danube frontier

36. Some recent studies of different aspects of urbanization in the Danubian region are Oltean 2007 (Dacia); Haynes 2011 (Thrace); Mladenovic 2012 (Moesia Superior). For the archaeology of this macroregion, currently being transformed by aerial photography, see also Wilkes 2005.

37. For general discussions of *vici* and *canabae*, see Poulter 1987; Hanel 2007.

38. Kemmers 2006: 189–244 gives a detailed account of military expenditure and the logistics of making cash payments to soldiers. For military spending in the context of the Roman state's overall expenditure, see Scheidel, chapter 5 in this volume, estimating that such spending amounted to well over one half of all state expenditure (60–65 percent).

zone, then, a cluster of “artificial” cities had arisen in a particular area, at a particular time, as the result of central state power. The key difference, of course, is that the tomb towns were aggressively manufactured by the coercive application of state power, while the *vici* and *canabae* were formed by the voluntary relocation of previously dispersed regional populations—but only, it is worth repeating, because the effects of Roman state power had incentivized such movement. Now, the conclusions to be drawn from just these two examples should not be pushed too far, since one can find evidence from both empires for indirect and direct state power in the making of “artificial” cities.³⁹ Nevertheless, the tomb towns near Chang’an did become very large, and the *vici* and *canabae* in the Danubian frontier zone did come to form a very extensive urban network, so these two examples effectively illustrate the different tendencies of state power, and its wider effects on urbanization, in the two empires.

3. URBAN-BASED ADMINISTRATION

Empires may be seen as states characterized by a dominant center that rules over a number of subordinated peripheries. Though size is not itself a defining feature of empire, most empires, including the two under examination here, laid claim to extensive territories. The challenge of controlling these territories and their inhabitants was especially acute for premodern states, since technological limitations and the unremitting problems of time and space militated strongly against the assertion of direct control over widely scattered subjects. Imperial rule, as a result, has tended to be wide in spatial extent, but shallow in social depth. One way for premodern states to manage large territories was to control the most strategic spaces within them, among which cities, as economic, political, and cultural points of concentration, were especially critical. Most premodern empires, therefore, were organized in a cellular way, with cities serving as the key nodes in a large-scale administrative network. The Han and Roman Empires were no exception to this pattern, but once again, the operation of centralized state power in and through cities was quite different.

In the second century CE, at the height of its imperial power, the Roman state fielded about two hundred high-ranking civilian administrators in its provinces. These officials did not administer the provinces by themselves, of course, but were assisted by staffers, seconded soldiers, and slaves, bringing the total number of Roman administrators (broadly defined) in the provinces up to about ten thousand. This is still a remarkably small number for an empire of some 60 million

39. The garrison towns of the northwestern frontier in China (see Erickson et al. 2010: 145–52; Pirazzoli-t’Serstevens 2010: 182–3), for example, may well have grown up (at least in part) through voluntary relocation to these areas, and there is some evidence (difficult to quantify) for coercive population transfers in the Roman Empire (see Alcock 1993: 142–5).

inhabitants.⁴⁰ Though Roman provincial administration was rationalized under Augustus, and though a protobureaucratic structure did emerge over the course of the first two centuries CE, the central state never managed to impose direct control over its subjects.⁴¹ Instead, it devolved a number of key administrative tasks, especially the maintenance of order and the collection of taxes, onto semiautonomous local governments, and in particular onto the local elites who dominated them. In exchange for these vital administrative services, without which the empire could not have functioned, these local elites were often rewarded with Roman citizenship, an important marker of status that also conferred a range of legal privileges, and with an implicit promise of armed support in case of local insurrections against their authority.⁴² This systematic collaboration between the central state and local aristocrats, from which both sides benefited, was the foundation of Roman imperial stability in the first two centuries CE.

In its dependence on local elites for the day-to-day management of its realm, the Roman state was typical of preindustrial empires, in which systematic collaboration between central and local elites was the norm.⁴³ The one major exception to this otherwise dominant pattern in premodern history is imperial China, in which the state managed to govern its far-flung territories more directly, and with a higher degree of centralization, than any comparable political system. Two points should be stressed. First, the total number of imperial administrators in the Han Empire was on the order of 130,000, with some 100,000 distributed throughout the empire's 103 commanderies and kingdoms, and another 30,000 or so in and around Chang'an.⁴⁴ This is over ten times the size of the Roman imperial government. In one well-attested commandery (Donghai, in the south-east), the central government managed to field between 60 and 107 officials in the larger counties (governing about 10,000 households, or 40,000–50,000 persons), and between 22 and 86 in the smaller ones.⁴⁵ The second key point, even more relevant to the main argument here, is that imperial officials at all levels of the Han administrative system—from the central administration and the commandery and kingdom administrations all the way down to the county level—were centrally appointed. That this highly centralized governing structure, well

40. For the number of high-ranking officials, see Hopkins 2009: 184; cf. Eck 2000: 238–65 for a general overview of administrative personnel in the middle Roman Empire. The numbers imply a ratio of one administrator for every six thousand subjects (and one senior administrator for every three hundred thousand subjects).

41. For the rise of a protobureaucratic system in Rome, see Eich 2005; for a comparative perspective, see Eich's chapter in this volume, chapter 4.

42. Clear treatments of this exchange are in Reynolds 1988 and Brunt 1990: 267–81, 515–17. Further discussion is below.

43. See, e.g., Eisenstadt 1963: 115–221; Kautsky 1982, esp. 132–43.

44. These figures are extrapolations from the detailed administrative information contained in the Yinwan documents (see below, nn. 45–6), and are broadly consistent with the testimony from written sources (especially the *Hanshu* and *Hou Hanshu*). With a total population in the empire of 57.7 million, the ratio of imperial officials to subjects would be 1:428 (see Loewe 2004: 70).

45. Loewe 2004: 49. The ratio of imperial officials to subjects implied by these numbers is anywhere from 1:374 (107 officials governing 40,000 persons) to 1:833 (60 officials governing 50,000 persons).

known from later periods of Chinese imperial history, was also in place during the Han period can be inferred from a series of documents unearthed in the village of Yinwan in the Donghai Commandery.⁴⁶ From these documents it is clear that officials posted to the counties and nobilities of Donghai were not local men, but came from outside the districts in which they served. If such a system was pervasive throughout the Han Empire—and there is no reason to believe that Donghai was unique in this regard—then we may conclude that even at the level of local administration, the central regime managed to administer its territories and to govern its subjects directly via centrally appointed imperial officials. There is no real parallel in any other premodern empire.

When it comes to the place of cities in the Han and Roman Empires, the organization of urban-based administration represents perhaps the starkest contrast in the operation and application of state power in the two imperial states. The difference does not lie so much in the capacity of the two states to extract revenues from its respective subjects, since centrally appointed officials in the Han Empire and local elites in the Roman Empire will have been equally motivated (and advantageously positioned) to channel resources away from the central state and into their own pockets.⁴⁷ Instead, the difference lies in the spatial distribution of, and central control over, the institutions and processes that produced social power.⁴⁸ Both states, as we have seen, depended on cities to rule their respective territories, but whereas the Han state managed to exercise some influence over local affairs, through its imposition of outside officials onto local communities, the Roman state, at least during the early and middle empire, could not effectively limit the autonomy of local elites, and so had little ability to interfere in municipal affairs on an empire-wide basis. As a result, the Roman state could never achieve the same degree of control as the Han state over these critical nodes of social power. How this fundamental difference in the development of the two empires came about, and how it relates to the larger issue of social control, is the topic to which we now turn.

The distribution of social power in the Han and Roman Empires—an index, as I suggest here, of the relationship between state power and urbanization—was rather differently configured in these two imperial systems, as the case studies above have shown, with major and long-lasting effects on the ways in which cities did and did not serve as instruments of social control in each of the two empires. This key difference in the distribution of social power, and the corresponding difference in the relative capacities for social control possessed by the

46. Discussed in detail in Loewe 2004: 38–88; for a brief summary, urging caution in generalizing from the situation in Donghai, see Loewe 2010b: 308–11. For local administration in general, see also Bielenstein 1980: 90–113.

47. So Scheidel 2009b: 19; for more detail on the dynamics of revenue collection in the two empires, see Scheidel's chapter in this volume, chapter 5.

48. I refer to "social power" in the sense developed by Mann 1986; cf. Noreña 2011: 10, 322–3.

two states, can be explained in part by the divergent histories of state formation out of which these two empires grew. Let us consider each imperial state in turn.

In the case of the Han Empire, the roles played by elites within cities, and the place of cities more generally within the larger sociopolitical structure of the imperial state, were ultimately the products of large-scale political and military changes that took place during the Warring States period (481–221 BCE).⁴⁹ The main engine driving these changes was a revolution in military mobilization. Following the collapse of effective monarchic authority at the end of the Western Zhou Dynasty, in the first half of the eighth century BCE, a handful of rival states in and around the North China Plain came to engage in sustained, internecine warfare. Most continued to deploy relatively small forces, no more than ten thousand strong, made up of nobles and their retainers fighting from chariots. But several states, especially Qi and Jin, began to draw on larger segments of their populations and, following the lead of the Wu and Yue states from the Yangtze River valley, to field larger infantry armies equipped with superior armor and iron weaponry. No state went further in its development along these lines than Qin. By the second half of the fourth century BCE, following a series of reforms implemented by Shang Yang in the 350s, the Qin state could put massive, centrally commanded armies, numbering (perhaps) in the hundreds of thousands, into the field against its competitors.⁵⁰ This manpower advantage proved decisive. By the end of the Warring States period, Qin had defeated all its rivals and consolidated its power over a vast territory.

Qin's military victory was enabled by a much deeper transformation in the relationship between state and society in early China. The basic mechanism by which Qin successfully mobilized not only its capital population but the rural peasantry as well was a simple trade whereby those who served in the infantry were rewarded with small plots of land, enough to sustain individual households, in exchange for their military service and the payment of taxes. This trade was systematized both through the large-scale division of land into rectilinear blocks, which maximized the amount of land under cultivation, and through the conversion of military districts (*xian*) into the principal units of local administration.⁵¹ As a result of these arrangements, peasants achieved a relatively stable income and a position in society that was no longer dependent on the dictates of local elites, and the Qin state built its formidable war machine. Especially salient for our purposes is the deleterious impact of this exchange on the old nobility. For in the new order forged by the more successful states of the Warring States period, above all Qin, city-states no longer held a privileged place in the political and

49. For what follows, see Lewis 1990, esp. 53–96, 1999, and 2006: 30–50; Hui 2005: 64–87; Chang 2007a: 40–64; Rosenstein 2009, esp. 24–8, 40–5.

50. For Shang Yang's reforms, see also Bodde 1986: 34–38.

51. For the practicalities of agriculture in the Han period, see Nishijima 1986: 551–74; for the process of registration and military recruitment at the district level, see Loewe 2010b: 312–3.

administrative apparatus of the central state, and local elites, already deprived of their military function, lost authority even in their own cities, increasingly replaced for day-to-day administration by agents appointed by and loyal to the monarchic regime. A direct result of imperial state formation under the Warring States, in other words, was the near eradication of the urban-based nobility of the Eastern Zhou period, and the gutting of cities as independent bases of social power.⁵²

The Han Dynasty was the heir to this military revolution and the institutional framework that went with it. This is the larger historical context in which the case studies presented above should be situated. Chang'an could be purpose-built as a new royal capital with no rival, in part because there were no competing cities with similar concentrations of power and authority. The central state could aggressively resettle populations and create entire new urban systems, as in the string of mausoleum towns outside of Chang'an, because it wielded such direct control over its urban subjects. And the monarchic regime could penetrate deeply into municipal affairs, in particular through the imposition of centrally appointed officials in cities and towns, because the local elites were not strong enough vis-à-vis the central state to defend their civic autonomy. That cities in the Han Empire tended not to function as independent bases of social power is nowhere more clear than in their cityscapes and urban fabrics, largely devoid, as they were, of monumental expressions of the power and authority of local elites, as Lewis's chapter in this volume (chapter 7) conclusively demonstrates. Not only did state power have a direct impact on the dynamics of urbanization in the Han Empire, then, it also worked to limit the power and autonomy of local elites, which must have turned cities, as a result, into relatively effective instruments of social control for the central state.

By contrast, cities in the Roman Empire did tend to function as independent bases of social power, and local elites did represent a significant counterweight to the authority of the central state. The high degree of civic autonomy conceded to municipalities in the Roman Empire is a strong indication of the continuing social power of these cities' local elites, as was their practice of advertising their own power and status through public buildings and the provision of public entertainment for local populations.⁵³ The Roman case is similar to that of Han in that the place of cities and local elites in the wider structures of empire can be attributed in large part to Rome's prior history of state formation. The axial moment in that history was the violent implosion of the

52. The old nobility was not wholly eliminated, of course. Though the old families had lost most of their independent political authority by the end of the Warring States period, some of them managed to retain their landed wealth and local status. See discussion in Ch'ü 1972: 160–65.

53. For the contrast with Han cities, see (again) Lewis's chapter in this volume, chapter 7. Bibliography on municipal building, public entertainment, and civic benefaction in Roman cities still begins from Veyne 1976; for more recent analyses, see, e.g., Lendon 1997: 84–89; Zuiderhoek 2009; Noreña 2011: chapter 5.

republican system of government at Rome and its replacement, under Augustus and his successors, of a dynastic monarchy, a political transformation that broadly coincided with the cessation of large-scale imperial expansion and the establishment of a more rational governmental apparatus and a more stable tributary regime.⁵⁴

For our purposes, the most relevant feature of the new order that arose under Augustus, which brought stability to the Roman Empire for almost 250 years, was the empire-wide collaboration between central state and local elites discussed above, in which the latter oversaw local administration and the collection of imperial taxes in exchange for status markers (especially the Roman citizenship), the implicit promise of armed support, and the possibility, for those who were particularly well positioned, of promotion to the imperial administration. This arrangement, the result of what Scheidel in this volume (chapter 5) refers to as a “grand bargain,” suited local elites, on the one hand, because it allowed them to reinforce and indeed enhance their standing in their own communities. And it suited the central state, on the other hand, since in this way it could administer its far-flung subject populations indirectly and inexpensively, and devote the bulk of its material resources to the maintenance of a large, professional standing army, which guarded the empire’s frontiers and provided some internal policing.⁵⁵ By any reckoning, the Roman army was a fundamental mechanism for central control over the territories and resources of the empire, and a key to understanding its stability and longevity. And the long-term maintenance of this potent instrument of coercion was only possible because municipal elites carried the burdens of local administration and the collection of taxes. But from the perspective of central state power, the grand bargain that underwrote this “military-tributary complex” came at a rather significant cost. For unlike their counterparts in the Han Empire, local elites in the Roman Empire continued to wield some independent power and authority, and as a result, cities continued to operate as partly independent bases of social power. In this respect, some distinctive features of the Roman Empire that are normally seen as effective ruling strategies, such as the devolution of administrative responsibilities onto municipalities and the concession of Roman citizenship to local elites, can actually be interpreted as signs of the relative weakness of the central state and of its inability to impose its will on its subject populations. As long as both sides in this grand bargain perceived it as working in their own interests, it functioned smoothly, especially during the middle empire (ca. 70–180 CE). But by the fifth century, when local elites no longer saw the advantage of “buying in” to the social and political order of the central state, and (in effect) stopped paying their taxes, the

54. For the coincidence of these political and structural shifts at Rome, and their wider implications for the history of the early empire, see Noreña 2011: 10–14, 322–4.

55. For the internal policing functions of the Roman army, see now Fuhrmann 2011, esp. 201–38.

system began to collapse, and the imperial regime was powerless to bring them back into the fold.⁵⁶

In brief, the Roman state, as a result of its dependence on cities and their local elites, had neither the infrastructural capacity nor the sort of institutional framework necessary to shape urbanization and urban life directly and on an empire-wide scale, and so had less control than did the Han state over the distribution of social power within its empire. In contrast with the Han Empire, therefore, cities in the Roman Empire did not really function as effective, “top-down” instruments of social control for the central state.⁵⁷

This conclusion has at least two major implications for our understanding of the Han and Roman Empires and their respective aftermaths, neither of which can be pursued in depth here. The first concerns the relationship between the different modalities of state power discussed in this chapter and their variable effects on the tempo and scale of urbanization in the two empires. For one major difference in the two cases is the explosive growth in the total number of cities in the Roman Empire. Between around 300 BCE and the middle of the second century CE, the number of cities in the Roman Empire ballooned from roughly 2,200 (2,258) to just over 3,100 (3,118), a 38 percent increase that took place mainly in the western half of the empire.⁵⁸ This is a dramatic shift in settlement patterns that does not seem to be paralleled in the analogous region of the Han Empire, the Yangtze River valley, which was similarly devoid of urban networks prior to the consolidation of central authority under the Qin and Han. It is true that the ecologies of North Africa, the Iberian Peninsula, and the west European continent were more favorable than those of the Yangtze River valley to large-scale urbanization, at least in a premodern context. But this pronounced discrepancy certainly creates the impression that state power in the Roman Empire served as a greater impetus to urbanization than did state power in the Han Empire, from which one might infer that the indirect operation of state power, while less effective as a mechanism for converting cities into instruments of social control, was nevertheless a greater catalyst than the direct operation of state power to the creation of cities.

The second important implication from the conclusion of this chapter concerns the longer-term development of state institutions and state power in Europe

56. The collapse of central authority in the fifth century CE, especially in the western empire, is a big and complex topic, with a very large bibliography; for the particular issue highlighted here, i.e., the changing balance of power in the competition between central state and local elites over a limited pool of material resources, see the lucid treatment in Wickham 1984.

57. With respect to social power in the Roman Empire in general, cities did of course function as powerful vehicles for the maintenance of social control (see, e.g., Whittaker 1997), but it was a social control that served the interests of an empire-wide aristocracy, not those of the central state itself. The temporary convergence of these two overlapping but ultimately discrete sets of interests, a defining feature of the “high” Roman Empire, is a key theme of Noreña 2011, esp. 245–324.

58. These figures, which represent a “high” count, come from Noreña in progress a (see above, nn. 10 and 21). The “low” count numbers are 958 (300 BCE) and 1,274 (mid-second century CE) cities, which represents a 33 percent increase.

and China, which began to diverge significantly from the sixth century CE onward. Several factors have been cited in order to explain what Scheidel and others have called “the first great divergence” between Europe and China, a measure of the dissolution or regeneration of central state power in the two macroregions.⁵⁹ The difference in the relationship between state power and urbanization in the two empires, as explored in this chapter, should be added to this list. For despite being characterized by several of the same structural weaknesses as the later Roman Empire, especially in terms of the refusal of large landowners to pay their taxes, the central institutions of the later Han Empire, including centralized rule through cities, were eventually reconstituted in the North China Plain, under the Sui (581–618 CE) and especially Tang (618–907 CE) Dynasties, in a way that was not paralleled in western Europe, which remained politically fragmented following the collapse of central Roman authority in the fifth century CE. This was perhaps the ultimate consequence of the difference between the direct and indirect operation of state power in urbanization in the Han and Roman Empires.

59. See in particular Scheidel 2009b, and his chapter in this volume, chapter 5.

